

and quality of life for our veterans. During this crucial time in the history of our Nation, I encourage my colleagues in Congress to do the same.

SUPPORTING DEMOCRACY IN BELARUS

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. President, I welcome the unanimous passage of the Belarus Democracy Act, BDA, by the United States Senate last night following similar action by the House of Representatives earlier this week. As co-chairman of the Helsinki Commission, I am particularly pleased at timely adoption of this important legislation. I thank Chairman LUGAR and Senator BIDEN for their assistance in facilitating consideration of this bill by the full Senate.

Repression and stagnation have been the hallmarks of the regime of Aleksandr Lukashenka, the leader of Belarus who increasingly tightened the noose around those who express independent views. A series of fundamentally flawed elections have left Belarus without legitimate executive and parliamentary leadership. Against this backdrop, preparations are underway for parliamentary elections and a referendum later this month. The elections take place in an environment in which the regime has intensified its repression of the remaining independent media and vilification of the opposition and their supporters. Lukashenka is also seeking to manipulate the situation to extend his rule by eliminating constitutional term limits for president, possibly paving the way for him to become a "president-for-life."

As co-chairman of the Helsinki Commission, I have maintained a strong interest in Belarus and have tried to inform my Senate colleagues about the increasingly troubling developments in that strategically located country, whose 10 million people have suffered cruelty at the hands of czars, Nazis, Communists and now, Aleksandr Lukashenka. During my service on the Commission, I have met and come to know many of the courageous individuals, who often at personal risk have spoken out in support of democracy in the face of Europe's last dictatorship, including the spouses of opposition leaders and a journalist who disappeared in 1999 and 2000 because they dared speak to the truth.

Belarus, under Lukashenka, has the worst human rights record in Europe. His regime has increasingly violated basic human rights and freedoms. The goal of the Belarus Democracy Act is to help put an end to repression and human rights violations in Belarus and to promote Belarus' entry into a democratic Euro-Atlantic community of nations following years of self-imposed isolation.

The Belarus Democracy Act authorizes additional assistance for democracy-building activities such as support for NGOs, independent media, including radio broadcasting to Belarus, and

international exchanges. It also encourages free and fair parliamentary elections, which have been notably absent in Belarus and which look to be highly problematic when they are held on October 17, judging by the pre-election environment and the regime's tight control over the electoral process.

The BDA includes sense of the Congress language that would prohibit U.S. Government financing, except for humanitarian reasons and U.S. executive directors of the international financial institutions would be encouraged to vote against financial assistance to the Government of Belarus except for loans and assistance for humanitarian needs. The bill also requires a report from the President concerning the sale of delivery of weapons or weapons-related technologies from Belarus to rogue states and on the personal wealth and assets of Lukashenka.

Nearly 2 years after the introduction of the Belarus Democracy Act the situation in that country has spiraled downward. Adoption and implementation of the Belarus Democracy Act will offer hope that the current period of political, economic and social stagnation will indeed end. It shows our concrete support for the courageous individuals, non-governmental organizations, independent media and independent trade unions struggling mightily against the machine of repression. And it shows our support for the people of Belarus, who deserve a chance for a brighter future.

DISPERSAL BARRIER

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I want to thank Senator JEFFORDS from Vermont for his recognition of the situation we are facing in the Great Lakes with Asian carp. We are currently trying to keep this invasive species out of the Great Lakes ecosystem by constructing a dispersal barrier in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. It is very important that this barrier be completed soon before this destructive invasive species makes it way to the Lakes. I know that my colleague from Vermont has the same problem in Lake Champlain, and I plan to do everything I can in the next Congress to work with him to authorize and fund a dispersal barrier for Lake Champlain.

Mr. JEFFORDS. Invasive species are a problem in Lake Champlain in my home State of Vermont. The Lake Champlain ecosystem and regional economy have been seriously impacted already by invasive species, many of which dispersed to the lake from the Hudson River by way of the Champlain Canal. Eurasian Milfoil and Water chestnut have rendered much of southern Lake Champlain unusable for recreation and stripped value from waterfront properties. Hundreds of thousands of dollars each year are spent to control these plants. The sea lamprey has devastated our sport fishery, and large amounts of money are being

spent on control, with only mixed results. These are just a few species. Once here it is nearly impossible to eliminate these invaders and even marginally controlling them is hugely expensive.

Other invasive species have not yet reached Lake Champlain but have spread widely throughout the Hudson and/or Great lakes drainages. We know they are coming and must act now to keep them out. These include fish like the Asian carp, Eurasian ruff, round goby, alewife and tench. Any one of these could change the Lake Champlain ecosystem in catastrophic ways, and each is moving toward the basin. Invertebrate species such as the spiny waterflea and fish hook flea, as well as aquatic plants are also of concern.

Because of the success of the dispersal barrier in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, we are looking for a similar barrier for the Lake Champlain Canal to keep more invasive species out of Lake Champlain. A barrier will also protect the Hudson River drainage from invasive species that may arrive first from the north, like a particularly damaging fish, the tench.

We must move quickly to complete design, and to construct a dispersal barrier in the Lake Champlain Canal. Time is of essence.

Mr. VOINOVICH. I thank the Senator from Vermont and recognize that his State is facing similar problems and I pledge to work with him and the Environment and Public Works Committee to advance authorization for a Lake Champlain Canal dispersal barrier through both the Water Resources Development Act and the National Aquatic Invasive Species Act in the next Congress.

Mr. LEVIN. I would like to join my colleagues in supporting the need for the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal dispersal barrier and pledge to work with my Great Lakes colleagues and Senator JEFFORDS to address the invasive species problems in Lake Champlain through the authorization of a dispersal barrier. I also am pleased to join my colleagues in our pledge to move the National Aquatic Invasive Species Act forward in the next Congress.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2003

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. On May 1, 2003, Senator KENNEDY and I introduced the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act, a bill that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society.

On January 25, 2001 in Washington, D.C., police arrested a 17-year-old in a gay bashing incident in the Dupont Circle area after the youth and another young man followed two men leaving a